Angell and Mahan: Technology, Globalization, and International Security Today

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In the early years of a new century, transformed by technology revolutions, Europe faces new and emerging global security, economic, and political challenges. Two critical voices of a similar era a century ago—Norman Angell and Alfred Thayer Mahan—are relevant again, and their contributions to the problems of their day are worth reconsidering in the current era.

Angell, an English writer, lecturer, and advocate, examined the relations between changes in technology and international economics and changes in grand strategy. Beginning with his 1909 book Europe’s Optical Illusion (later retitled The Great Illusion), he wrote and spoke for decades about the futility of war.1 He was recognized for his work with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1933.

Mahan served an American naval officer, but his importance was as an historian and geostrategist. Writing mostly from 1890 to 1910, he explored the impact of the radical technological changes of his era on security, economics, and politics. He contributed to a reevaluation of the interests and opportunities of war and peace for European and American allies and their adversaries.

Together, Angell and Mahan offer an array of lessons, or at least lenses, for understanding some of the most important challenges to Europe and the

An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Twenty-First International Conference of Europeanists, Council for European Studies, Washington, DC, March 2014. The author wishes to give special thanks to Paul C. Bishop, P.E.


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world. This essay considers the arguments of Angell and Mahan in their own time, throughout the twentieth century, and today. In this context, the latter sections focus more closely on Russia’s and China’s twenty-first-century approach to modern sea power and the cybersecurity concerns of today’s “virtual sea.”

**Norman Angell and the Futility of War in a Globalized Age**

Born in 1872 in England, Norman Angell lived in a world whose ideas were formed by Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. In Thucydides’ Melian dialogues about power, perception, and shame, Athens argued to Melos that “the strong do as they can and the weak suffer what they must.” Though Angell predated twentieth-century realists like E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, the states of his era behaved in a world they later described. For Carr, international relations was defined chiefly by struggle between states, including the unequal power relations between have and have-not states. Morgenthau explained political actions based on “interest defined in terms of power,” rather than through motives or ideology. International politics was shaped by forces like those that shaped human nature: fear, greed, and survival. Military power was the key means and metric.

Angell was among the first to recognize that the changes in the world of economic interdependence required new thinking about international security. The old reasoning, to Angell, was that war was for security and material gain:

[States] necessarily pushed to territorial expansion and the exercise of political force against others. . . . It is assumed, therefore, that a nation’s relative prosperity is broadly determined by its political power; that nations being competing units, [and] advantage, in the last resort, goes to the possessor of preponderant military force.

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To Angell, the world of the old reasoning was passing away, although the leaders and populations were not yet noticing. In the emerging “interdependence,” old reasoning was faulty and dangerous. Angell’s primary message was “not that war is impossible, but that it is futile—useless, even when completely victorious, as a means of securing those moral or material ends which represent the needs of modern European peoples.”

Men and states can still choose war, but in an era in which more is to be gained by trade and investment, war is just not a logical, rational choice:

The commerce and industry of a people no longer depend upon the expansion of its political frontiers; that a nation’s political and economic frontiers do not now necessarily coincide; that military power is socially and economically futile, and can have no relation to the prosperity of the people exercising it; that it is impossible for one nation to seize by force the wealth or trade of another—to enrich itself by subjugating, or imposing its will by force on another; that, in short, war, even when victorious, can no longer achieve those aims for which peoples strive.

Angell’s arguments were made by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the 1970s when they described a complex interdependence among (mostly Western) states and nonstate actors in which sometimes cooperation was more effective than conflict in increasing power and wealth. Niall Ferguson and Thomas Friedman refer to Angell’s era as an early “globalization.” Friedman, the leading popular voice of 1990s globalization, offered his “Golden Arches theory of conflict prevention” and “Dell theory of conflict prevention.” These asserted that when populations reach a certain level of economic development and an intensive level of engagement in international trade and finance, they will prefer not to go to war with similar populations. Ferguson referred back to Angell’s time directly, noting modern analogies to the pre–World War I global security threats.

6. Ibid., v.
7. Ibid., x.
Angell also made a second point about the futility of war in the early twentieth century. War had lost any ability it may have once had as a shaper not just of states but of nations, not just of governments, but of people. War had become

futile as a means of enforcing a nation’s moral ideals or imposing social institutions upon a conquered people. Germany could not turn Canada or Australia into German colonies—i.e., stamp out their language, law, literature, traditions, etc.—by “capturing” them. The fight for ideals can no longer take the form of fight between nations, because the lines of division on moral questions are within the nations themselves and intersect the political frontiers.  

Here, Angell anticipated Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations, constructivism’s focus on identity and ideas, and post–September 11 nation-building. For Huntington, post–Cold War international conflict promised to break along “civilizational” lines—the West versus Islam, the West versus China, and so forth. Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore, and other constructivists bent away from power and material gain as the only driving influences in international relations, pointing instead toward identity, interests other than power, and the attractiveness of certain ideas. Angell anticipated Karl Deutsch’s “we-feeling,” and Michael Doyle and Bruce Russett on democratic peace. American policymakers adopted these and combined them with the ideas of a universal preference for democracy to try to reshape Afghanistan and Iraq—as they had tried earlier to reshape Yeltsin’s Russia, 1960s Vietnam, and (more successfully) post–World War II Germany and Japan.

Angell is nearly a century ahead, pressing these ideas for his own time. But Angell shared the “cautious” in “cautious optimism.” Again, it is not that war was impossible. It is that states, leaders, and populations would have to acknowledge the very large economic cost of engaging in military conflict compared to pursuing security aims that recognize the new global structures and logic.

**Alfred T. Mahan: Lessons from Sea Power for a Changing World**

Like Angell, Mahan saw the rapidly changing technologies and emerging interdependence as critical to understanding new international security challenges. But Mahan was much less optimistic. In his most famous book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (1890), Mahan focused on European wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He detailed the role of merchant and naval fleets and supporting bases and coaling stations. He considered the legitimacy of military security and economic prosperity that came from sea trade protected by a dominant fleet. But his writings also looked forward, addressing emerging threats. Mahan saw that new technology and trade could lead to more luxuries and also to more military capabilities. He feared a rash of new risks from advances in technology and interdependence, such as European access through the Panama Canal to the undefended West Coast of the United States, the dangerous rise of Asia, and wars of economic ambition.

Mahan’s analyses combined to drive a number of developments in the European and American naval doctrines. These included an arms race in the construction of fleets and the securing of bases in the Caribbean in the two decades preceding World War I. When his book *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* was published in 1890, the US Navy had forty-two active ships—twenty-nine “old” and thirteen “steel.” Adding battleships, cruisers, gunboats, and torpedo boats, the number rose to one hundred “steel”

15. See, for example, A. T. Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1897), a collection of articles from the 1890s from the *Atlantic Monthly*, Harper’s, and other outlets.

Navy ships by 1900 and to nearly two hundred by 1910. To support the growing fleet and defend emerging interests, the United States would lease or occupy a number of Caribbean ports by the outbreak of World War I and (sixteen days later) the opening of the Panama Canal.

Mahan shared a number of similarities with Angell. Although Mahan was a generation older, he too saw the difficulties of operating in a world that sometimes seemed to be clearly realist while other times being obviously interdependent. States and their new standing armies and navies were in conflict with one another over any number of political and security interests. During the nineteenth century in Europe there was more peace generally than in the preceding centuries, but “states in conflict” was the usual explanation for wars that did happen. Mahan wrote of an unmistakable realism: “All around us now is strife. . . . Everywhere is nation against nation.”17 “Equity which cannot be had by law must be had by force,” he wrote later, and “power must be secured for ourselves by that rude and imperfect, but not ignoble, arbiter, force.”18 And in this regard, to Mahan, the United States was weak. In the Bering Sea seal fishing dispute between the United States and Canada that began in 1886, for example, Mahan argued that the Americans had international law on its side but that Canada had Great Britain in its corner.19 Force, he wrote, not right nor any Monroe Doctrine tradition, would determine which European powers would have bases across the Caribbean Sea for access to or control of the coming Panama Canal.20

But Mahan also saw the rise of globalization — “interdependence” — with the dramatic technological improvements and the growth of international trade.21 Steamships, transatlantic telegraph, and radio communications joined political, economic, and security systems into “an articulated system” of trade amid peace and a “prevalence of a purely economical conception of national greatness.”22 He noted the economic logic of Sir Robert Walpole’s

20. Ibid., 15.
22. Ibid.
quieta non movere for the concert of powers, although he was dubious of the durability of a peace reliant on preference for economic gain, “bread alone,” and “peace and plenty.”

These developments challenged the United States. The young country had focused for decades on the exploration and natural resources of its own new continent, wars with its indigenous Native Americans, and the politics of slavery, states’ rights, secession, and Reconstruction. By the 1890s, the United States was opening itself up to the opportunities of the newly globalizing world, and to its threats. In doing so, the United States revealed weaknesses it had been able to hide. “Commerce,” Mahan wavered, “on the one hand deters war, on the other hand it engenders conflict, fostering ambitions and strifes which tend toward armed collision.”

Mahan’s analysis of security threats from emerging technologies and interdependence was also important because of his approach to the principle of freedom of the seas for commerce. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, freedom of the seas had been supported by France’s King Francis I, Holland’s Hugo Grotius, England’s Queen Elizabeth I, and the American Continental Congress. But Mahan observed that commerce is the source of national wealth, and national wealth the source of military power. Thus, commerce is an appropriate target in attacking a country’s source of military power.

Ships and cargoes in transit upon the sea are private property in only one point of view, and that the narrowest. Internationally considered, they are national wealth engaged in reproducing and multiplying itself, to the intensification of the national power. . . . It is therefore a most proper object of attack.

Attacks on national wealth had important psychological effects, Mahan argued. The “excessive sensitiveness” of populations to their new wealth was important in determining military targets. Mahan clarified that attacking

international private sea trade, and the psychological reliance on physical comfort it made possible, was actually a benefit to mankind. Attacks on trade are “more humane, and more conducive to the objects of war, than the slaughter of men.” War would be more likely and more brutal, he concludes, if a nation’s sea trade, “the purveyor of its comfort,” were immune from attack.

Mahan’s World or Angell’s for the Twentieth Century?

The appalling inhumanity of World War I seemed to prove Mahan’s ideas and fears correct. The Great War stagnated on the Western front while it was fought in China, the South Pacific, the Middle East, and elsewhere, killing over 17 million people. Punitive postwar policies against Germany helped create fertile ground for national socialism. US president Woodrow Wilson was an advocate of free trade, self-determination, disarmament, and an international body committed to collective security, but he could not get his domestic political opposition to agree. Developed and developing countries alike were ruined during the Great Depression, to which many countries responded with protectionist and beggar-thy-neighbor policies. The most hopeful product of the First World War, the League of Nations, failed when the larger powers chose self-interest over collective security. National interest was understood in realist, state-versus-state, zero-sum perspectives. Gains were sought through contest and war instead of through international trade and the expansion of human rights. World War II—with some 60 million dead—offered convincing evidence of Mahan’s vision as ultimately correct. After World War II, the bifurcation of global interests meant more than four decades of third-world proxy wars, giant nuclear arsenals, a space race, and near catastrophes.

The post–World War II era was complicated. In August 1941, even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Britain and the United States agreed to a progressive postwar plan in the Atlantic Charter. The postwar Allies and a total of fifty-one countries signed the United Nations charter, committing to universal human rights and another effort at organized peace. The Allies rebuilt, restructured, and reintegrated defeated Japan and (West) Germany.
into the community of free nations. By mid century, France and Germany had begun to set aside historical differences, to pursue economic cooperation, as if Angell had written the script for fathers of the European Union, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet. Italy, Britain, and the rest of Western Europe—spurred by mutual fear during the Cold War—joined indecisively and successfully enough to seem permanent and later to attract Eastern Europe. After 1953, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea and eventually mainland China also chose trade and investment over war, often bringing along their Southeast Asian neighbors. Unlike homogenously democratic Western Europe, in East Asia and then Latin America it was a range of political regime types that increasingly chose economic competition and cooperation over military struggle.

The Cold War’s strange “nuclear peace” was not easily explained by the ideals of Mahan or Angell, when the fear of catastrophic war seemed to prevent it. By the 1980s, democratization, free markets, and a liberal peace expanded to Southern Europe, Latin America, and parts of East Asia and Africa. Increasing numbers of countries adopted Angell’s ideas of interdependence—including, finally, Russia, which returned to the “common home” of Europe inspired by Mikhail Gorbachev—choosing the benefits of trade over the costs of war.

As a century earlier, a post–Cold War surge of new technologies—this time an information technology (IT) revolution—fueled a new era of globalization and interdependence. This time Angell’s ideas seemed to prevail. The IT revolution reshaped manufacturing, commerce, transportation, finance, health care, entertainment, governance, espionage, combat, and nearly everything else. Communications of every kind were digitized and instantly, globally distributed. The “complex interdependence” of the 1970s and 1980s evolved into globalization, while trade and democratization surged.28 In the developed world, economists and politicians spoke of eliminating the political and economic costs of the boom-and-bust business cycle.29 Free markets and free peoples were seen to have won the century-long battle against com-

peting -isms.\textsuperscript{30} But like in Mahan’s fears of Europe’s new access to the US west coast, radical terrorists used the tools of globalization to attack its giant symbols.

\textbf{Angell and Mahan after 9-11}

Politics and technology combined to reshape the turn of the twenty-first century as it had the turn of the twentieth. The last part of this essay examines two aspects of interdependence today against the ideas of Angell and Mahan: the twenty-first century at sea and the Internet.

By 2000, globalization, Internet commerce, and American hyperpuissance were shaping an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.\textsuperscript{31} The major powers seemed to agree that trade was decisively more rewarding than pursuit of national goals by military conflict. The European Union had a common currency and was negotiating the accession of several former Soviet bloc countries. International trade soared and a global middle class emerged. The Internet joined billions of people for socializing, commerce, and political organizing. In 2001, though, the United States was attacked not by a state but by a small group associated with anti-Western, antimodern, anti-imperialist, and radical religious views, using the tools of globalization against globalization. The response from the United States was to destroy in Afghanistan the “evil-doers” and those who harbored them, and to destroy in Iraq a regime that might also threaten the international order. It was a “new, new realism”—high-tech network-centric warfare with global surveillance and targeting technologies, along with special forces on horseback, to fight state and nonstate actors, in order to preserve the presumed benefits of the peaceful globalization status quo. America’s two decade-long wars have left it weaker at home and abroad to deal with the emerging issues of traditional sea power and cybersecurity.

\textsuperscript{30} For more, see Francis Fukuyama, \textit{The End of History and the Last Man} (New York: Free Press, 2006).
Mahan’s New Coaling Stations

The global trade Mahan saw growing in the late nineteenth century has been surging again a century later. Global trade doubled from 1990 to 2000 and more than doubled again in the following decade—the majority of it by sea.\textsuperscript{32} But for Mahan, globalization, sea power, and conflict went together. Today the importance to Russia of having supporting bases and their modern equivalent of coaling stations is demonstrated in dramatic ways in the Arctic, the Black Sea, and elsewhere. Meanwhile, an emerging China exhibits an old-fashioned extension of sea power for material gain.

Russia is developing Arctic infrastructure to support its naval and merchant fleets. The Russian coast extends across nearly half of the Arctic Circle. The magnitude of Arctic sea ice melt in recent years has opened the Northern Sea Route (from Norway over Russia toward Alaska).\textsuperscript{33} Russia is currently preparing for the considerable increases in shipping that the dramatic melt is expected to permit.

Meanwhile, natural resource development in the Russian Arctic is already well underway. The development of oil and gas and other exploration coincides with seafloor mapping expeditions. These scientific efforts are designed, in part, to legitimize claims under international treaties for extensions of exclusive natural resource rights (and other states are doing the same).\textsuperscript{34} The planting of the Russian flag on the North Pole sea floor in 2007 was merely symbolic, like the US flag on the moon in 1969. But the race for resources in the Arctic has led, in some countries, to an arms race to build more Arctic-worthy vessels and to develop more supporting legal and physical infrastructure.

Disputes also emerge in the “western” Arctic in and near Canada. In late
2013 when Canada pledged to make claims to the North Pole, Russian president Vladimir Putin responded the next day in televised remarks, restating that the Arctic is a top priority for the Russian armed forces and the country’s national interests.35 The United States and Canada have made agreements on the environment, search and rescue, and other Arctic issues, but have had two significant disagreements: a cartographic dispute in the Beaufort Sea, and a trickier, more fundamental dispute on the Northwest Passage. The United States claims that certain pathways of the Northwest Passage are international waters, while Canada fiercely maintains they are domestic. In 2006, Canada’s military adopted the usage of “Canadian Internal Waters,”36 and in 2009, Canada’s parliament unanimously renamed it the “Canadian Northwest Passage.”37

Russia exhibits Mahan’s ideas in warmer waters as well. Since 2003 Russia has been developing a home for its Black Sea Fleet at Novorossiysk, home of the Black Sea Fleet earlier in Russian history. Russia’s continuing reliance on its naval facility in Sevastopol, Crimea, was a critical factor in the conflict with Ukraine that began in late 2013 over competing EU-Ukraine and Russia-Ukraine economic deals. Lease agreements from 1998 and 2010 extended Russia’s rights on the Crimea until at least 2042. But following popular protests and the fall of Ukraine’s president in February 2014, Russia used military and paramilitary assets to secure its interests there, leading to a vote in the Crimean local parliament in favor of seceding from Ukraine to become part of Russia.

Further consistent with Mahan’s analysis, Russia has been looking to secure support facilities around the world. After closing bases in Cuba and Vietnam in 2002, Russia’s only overseas “coaling station” was in Syria, whose future became as uncertain as that of Syria itself. In 2014, Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu announced negotiations for military bases and refueling sites for Russian strategic bombers in Vietnam, Cuba, Veneze-

ela, Nicaragua, the Seychelles, Singapore, and several other countries: “The talks are under way, and we are close to signing the relevant documents.”

Meanwhile, China has emerged as a growing sea power. With natural resources, fishing, and shipping lanes at stake, it has contested the claims of Vietnam, the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea to various islands and the surrounding seas. The US Congressional Research Service concluded in 2014 that

China’s naval modernization effort encompasses a broad array of weapon acquisition programs, including antiship ballistic missiles (ASBMs), antiship cruise missiles (ASCMs), submarines, surface ships, aircraft, and supporting C4ISR (command and control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) systems.

The purposes of this modernization included China’s interests in Taiwan. They also included the following:

Asserting or defending China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea; . . . displacing US influence in the Western Pacific; and asserting China’s status as a leading regional power and major world power. . . . Observers believe China wants its military to be capable of acting as an anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) force—a force that can deter US intervention.

**Freedom of the (Virtual) Seas**

In the early 1990s, the Internet began to change from a tool for physics researchers to a ubiquitous connection among governments, companies, and individuals. It spawned a $400 billion dollar search engine company, a billion-person social media network, and an online encyclopedia with over 30
million articles in nearly three hundred languages. Pope Francis called it “a gift from God.”

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and United States recognized a freedom of the seas—and of commerce generally. The Soviets and Americans did not usually interfere with each other’s international rail, sea, and air freight or their natural resources. While each amassed large armies and thousands of nuclear weapons and waged proxy wars in the third world, they did not attack each other’s economic essentials. This Cold War gentlemen’s agreement, which Mahan found unlikely in the nineteenth century, seems not to have survived into the twenty-first century’s Internet Age.

The Internet might be seen as an extension of Mahan’s concern about newly exposed coasts. For Mahan, a Panama Canal meant a wide range of changes for the United States and European powers, as well as for the people of the Caribbean. Opening an isthmus canal promised vast increases in wealth from trade among Europe, the US east and west, and Asia. But it also made the American west coast vulnerable in new ways and to new parties. Similarly, the Internet created countless new industries and new avenues for wealth creation. But it also opened up Internet users—state, commercial, and individual—to new kinds of attacks.

Mahan detailed the merits of cyberattacks a half-century before Timothy Berners-Lee and Bill Gates were born. He noted that the “preservation of commercial and financial interests constitutes now a political consideration of the first importance, making for peace and deterring from war.”

He described the psychological and security rationales for attacking the economic sources of national wealth thusly:

National nerves are exasperated by the delicacy of financial situations, and national resistance to hardship is sapped by generations that have known war only by the battlefield, not in the prolonged endurance of pri-

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42. Mahan, “Considerations,” in Retrospect and Prospect, 144.
vation and straitness extending through years and reaching every class of community.43

The logical extension to cyberattacks today is ominous. Mahan essentially advocates state-on-state, military-on-military cyberattacks. Examples abound. Stuxnet, the American malware, was deployed against the programmable logic controllers in Iran’s uranium enrichment program in 2009 and 2010.44 Russia is alleged to have used cyberattacks with such malware as Red October, Agent BTZ, and Turla on US diplomatic, military, and nuclear research targets.45 Targeting by Russia of Internet users in Georgia and Ukraine before military activity began, and relentless Chinese attacks on the Pentagon, also seem to fit in obvious state-to-state conflicts.

Mahan’s reasoning extends to states’ attacks on private commerce in cyberspace. A 2013 US military report to Congress judged that China was investing in a wide range of “military programs and weapons designed to improve extended-range power projection and operations in emerging domains such as cyber, space, and electronic warfare.”46 Mandiant, an American computer security firm, reported that a single Chinese agency compromised at least “141 companies spanning 20 major industries.”47 Targets included “broad categories of intellectual property, including technology blueprints, proprietary manufacturing processes, test results, business plans, pricing documents, partnership agreements, and emails and contact lists from victim organizations’ leadership.”48

In 2014, Symantec, an Internet security company, detailed Dragonfly. This complex series of attacks targeted “energy grid operators, major electricity

43. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
generation firms, petroleum pipeline operators, and energy industry industrial equipment providers” in the United States, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Turkey, and Poland. Its authors are “technically adept and able to think strategically.” Symantec concluded the following:

Dragonfly bears the hallmarks of a state-sponsored operation, displaying a high degree of technical capability. The group is able to mount attacks through multiple vectors and compromise numerous third party websites in the process. Dragonfly has targeted multiple organizations in the energy sector over a long period of time. Its current main motive appears to be cyber-espionage, with potential for sabotage a definite secondary capability.

To Mahan, private property is national wealth multiplying itself for the increase of national power and “is therefore a most proper object of attack.”

National security forces need to work closely with other public and private interests to protect commerce, utilities, ports, and all manner of industry, from Airbus to Total to Bolsa Istanbul.

Some governments are responding. The United States began to address this by developing US Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) in 2006, formalized in 2009. A pillar of CYBERCOM is that the government and industry must work together to identify and thwart attacks. In 2014, President Barack Obama issued the Executive Order on Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity. Its new cybersecurity guide directed government-industry cooperation for facilities generating and transmitting electricity, producing and distributing oil and gas, and managing telecommunications, drinking and waste water, agriculture, food production, heating, public health, transportation and financial and security services.

50. Ibid.
This opens up the question of when and whether states are at war. Although piracy and privateers existed in the nineteenth century, war was understood as a political action of one state against another—fleets flying national flags and/or uniformed armies lined up against one another. In an era of globalization and in a post–September 11 world, the power of nonstate groups ranges from al Qaeda and multinational enterprises to global nongovernmental organizations, semi-autonomous states, and social media. The natures of conflict, spying, industrial espionage, organized crime, and “attack” are all very different from what Mahan presumed. But by Mahan’s logic, Russia threatening to halt energy exports to Europe as diplomatic leverage can be seen as a “more humane” alternative to conventional war.53

Conclusion

The struggle to identify the character of international relations is as critical today as it was a century ago. Angell writes that in the globalizing world, the logic of warfare no longer makes any sense (if it ever did), but instead that war is a choice man makes for reasons other than economic rationality. Mahan writes of the importance of sea power to promote and protect a growing international trade, but also of the threats inherent to the new global economy.

Angell and Mahan debated their ideas in 1912 in the North American Review.54 Mahan reviewed The Great Illusion as an illusion itself, rejecting the ideas that war is for economic self-interest and that armaments are not for economic gain. Angell responded that most attention to his book focused on the economic matters rather than on his point that the morality of men and states was evolving to redefine what counts as “national interest.” Civilization used to revere the monastic Christian ascetic and the honor of a duel between gentlemen, but no more. Similarly, Angell offered that mere accumulation of territory is no longer in the national interest. Instead, focus is on “better conditions for the great mass of the people,” addressing concerns of

labor, health, education, and individual dignity, not for just the few but for the many.

A 1990 conference at the US Naval War College on the centennial of The Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660–1783 offered a look back at Mahan. Presenters noted Mahan’s loss of emphasis, over time, on the importance and benefits of trade, focusing more on the military for political power projection. Mahan saw the rise of Japan, China, and India as huge populations to fear instead of as sources of new wealth. For Mahan, globalization was a threat, or one more threat in the existing, old worldview. Through the world wars, Mahan proved to be right. Benefits from modern industry, transportation, and communications were directed by states to war.

The question between Angell and Mahan got murkier by mid century. The Cold War divided the world, diverted resources, and risked human annihilation. China, Japan, and India split between the new superpowers and nonalignment. But Europe began to build the international community Angell imagined. By the end of the twentieth century, the ideas of peace, prosperity, and democracy seemed to be the choice of states and populations from Vancouver to Vladivostok—and in much of the developing world too.

Today, the war of ideas of Mahan and Angell rages on. The 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, DC, followed by attacks on London, Madrid, and elsewhere, reoriented the world again. The most technologically advanced military in history was humbled by wars with ancient tribes, and the American people demanded, in their usual pattern, to return to a more isolationist position. Intranational wars that rose in the 1990s flared on through the next decade, including new ones in the wake of the once-hopeful Arab Spring. Nonstate actors grew from localized terror groups like the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain or Shining Path in Peru to global networks of violent ideologues (the various al Qaeda–affiliated groups) and even nonstate armies like the Islamic State. The surge in democratization of previous decades ebbed.

56. The Islamic State (IS) has also been called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).
There were some positive developments, too. Mobile telephony went global: one-third of the world’s population gained Internet access. Rich countries got richer, but so did many people in poor countries. Philanthropy and development aid, for all its shortcomings, made real progress. China lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty through economic liberalization and trade. But it continued to repress its dissidents and threaten its neighbors. Global health scares and environmental changes create new risks. And conflict in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Nigeria, and elsewhere continued, often not easily explainable by ideas typical of Angell or Mahan.

Mahan feared interdependence, and was correct for most of the twentieth century. States responded to challenges and crises in self-interested, often violent ways. Angell was more optimistic. His ideas began to develop and take shape after World War II and go viral after the Cold War. States, companies, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals increasingly used technology and freedom to innovate for political, economic, and social goods. Mahan and Angell each have strong claims early in the twenty-first century, with old-fashioned realism, global jihadis, stubborn poverty, and environmental threats countered by Internet-aided overthrows of dictators and global supply chains of peace and prosperity. The relationship of security and globalization is a challenge today as much as it was at the time of Angell and Mahan. Whether states and new actors will perceive and act as Mahan or Angell would have, or in a new way for new challenges, will be central to the history of the twenty-first century.